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WESTERN OREGON PLAN REVISIONS

WESTERN OREGON PLAN REVISIONS NEWS

SCOPING FOR ISSUES – NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO. 1 AUGUST 2005

BLM

Salem, Eugene, Roseburg, Coos Bay, Medford, and Klamath Falls Offices

Welcome...

This is the first issue of the Bureau of Land Management's Western Oregon Plan Revision Newsletter. Over the next 3 years, the BLM will be taking a close look at how we manage over 2.5 million acres (almost 4000 square miles) of public lands in western Oregon.

This Newsletter contains information about the challenges we face and how you can help us develop creative solutions.

The BLM is entering the first stage of the planning process called "Scoping." This is when we reach out to our neighbors and "stakeholders" and ask what are the challenges and opportunities associated with these lands, and how can we solve these issues?

In this newsletter we'll attempt to answer some important questions:

- Why we're revising these plans?
- What are "O&C Lands?
- Why are these lands important to Oregon and the nation?
- Does this change the Northwest Forest Plan?
- What are the steps in the planning process?
- How can I get involved to make a difference?

BLM Begins Western Oregon Plan Revisions Process

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in western Oregon is faced with a significant challenge. As a Federal agency the BLM is responsible for the management of over 2.5 million acres of public forest lands. These lands are some of the most scenic and productive forest lands in the Pacific Northwest.

For the last ten years these lands have been managed under six Resource Management Plans that were developed using the standards of the Federal Northwest Forest Plan. Implementation of these Resource Management Plans has been very successful on some fronts, but has not been successful on others -- particularly in meeting commitments made with local counties and communities for timber production.

It's time to take a close look at these Resource Management Plans and make some adjustments if possible. Your contribution to this process is vital.

Your Comments Needed Now to Shape the Planning Criteria and Define Planning Alternatives.

Through this process, the BLM will revise the six Resource Management Plans (RMP) with a single Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Salem District, Eugene District, Coos Bay District, Roseburg District, Medford District, and the Klamath Falls Resource Area of the Lakeview District Office.

After the formal scoping period, the BLM will develop some clearly defined planning criteria to guide the plan revisions. The scope of the plan revisions is not unbounded. These planning criteria will help us develop a reasonable range of alternatives that are tailored to the issues identified and ensure that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. You can help us develop those criteria.

Below, we've listed some preliminary planning criteria and issues that we hope you'll review and give us your comments and suggestions.

Meeting the Law: In revising the Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon BLM Districts, the BLM must achieve the O&C Act's requirement of permanent forest production, as interpreted by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, on the O&C lands while complying with other applicable laws such as the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, FLPMA, etc.

Focus on Significant Issues: The plan revisions and associated EIS will be focused on significant issues. We'd like your comments on the preliminary issues we've identified here and any other issues that may be important to you.

- **Vegetation** — How should BLM provide a sustainable supply of wood and other forest products as mandated by the O&C Lands Act while meeting applicable laws and regulations?
- **Habitat for Special Status Species** – How can BLM-managed lands contribute to the conservation of species consistent with the Endangered Species Act?
- **Watershed management and water quality** – How can BLM-managed lands contribute to meeting the goals of the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act?
- **Wildland fire and fuels** – How should BLM manage public lands to reduce the risk of wildfires and integrate fire back into the ecosystem?

Alternatives to be Considered: A reasonable range of alternatives will be rigorously explored and objectively evaluated in the revisions. All alternatives will be designed to comply with existing laws. Two alternatives have been identified at this time. Your suggestions for additional alternatives are requested. The two required alternatives are:

- **No Action** – continue management under the current RMPs. (Required by NEPA)
- **An alternative** which will not create any reserves on O&C lands except as required to avoid jeopardy to species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. (Required by Settlement Agreement)

Alternative Selection: In selecting management alternatives for the planning area, the BLM will consider factors such as:

- The quality of habitats created
- The impacts on water quality limited streams
- The amount of timber produced
- The costs of implementation, both in effort and dollars
- The contributions to community economic stability
- The economic return to the U.S. Treasury and Western Oregon Counties

Providing Comments: Comments from the public about issues to be considered, or the preliminary planning criteria above must be submitted in writing by October 21, 2005, to: Bureau of Land Management, Oregon/Washington State Office; ATTN: Western Oregon Planning Revision (OR930.1); P.O. Box 2965; Portland, Oregon 97208, e-mail: orwopr@or.blm.gov.

Dates and locations for public meetings or other events will be announced though mailings, the local news media, newsletters, and the BLM internet site at least 15 days prior to any event.

All public comments, including names and mailing addresses of respondents, may be published as part of the EIS. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, please state this prominently at the beginning of your written correspondence. The BLM will honor such requests to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organization or businesses, will be available to the public in their entirety.

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A Note from BLM Oregon/Washington State Director, Elaine M. Brong August 2005

Elaine M. Brong
Oregon/Washington State Director

Dear Friends:

We've recently initiated a planning process to revise all of our Resource Management Plans for western Oregon. This is a significant undertaking and is going to require a tremendous amount of effort from the Federal, State, and local levels, and most importantly from you. The planning area for this project includes approximately 2.5 million acres of public land contained in the BLM's Salem, Eugene, Coos Bay, Roseburg, and Medford Districts and our Klamath Falls Resource Area of the Lakeview District. Because of the importance and enormity of this project we are working to fully identify specific resource concerns that should be considered during the revision process.

The current Resource Management Plans were completed shortly after the approval of the Northwest Forest Plan in 1995. We believe the goals stated in the Northwest Forest Plan ten years ago are still valid, but it's time to take a fresh look at how we go about reaching those goals for several reasons.

We are revising our plans now because key aspects of implementation have proven to be extremely controversial. We find ourselves spending too much time in the courtroom and mired in process for process sake with little to show in the way of benefit to the resources or sustainable support for local communities. The bottom line is that the plans have not been able to operate as envisioned and we have not been able to meet our commitments to Counties and local communities to make a sustainable supply of timber available for sale.

We're also revising our plans because of a court settlement. This settlement agreement requires the BLM to re-focus our efforts towards on-the-ground management by fulfilling the commitments we made in response to the Northwest Forest Plan, and also specifies that we revise the existing Resource Management Plans by the end of 2008.

The revisions to the existing Resource Management Plans will ultimately answer the question regarding how the BLM should manage the lands covered by the O&C Lands Act of 1937. This act requires that these western Oregon lands be managed to achieve the requirement of permanent forest production. We must have Resource Management Plans that are consistent with the O&C Lands Act as interpreted by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, while also complying with other applicable laws such as the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act. That is our challenge.

Throughout this planning process, we will work collaboratively with interested parties to identify which management direction is best suited to local, regional, and national interests. This public scoping process will help identify planning issues and provide for public comment on the proposed planning criteria.

I hope you'll return the enclosed post card letting us know that you want to remain involved in the process. I invite you to take a close look at the preliminary issues and planning criteria described on page 2 of this newsletter and send us you comments and ideas.

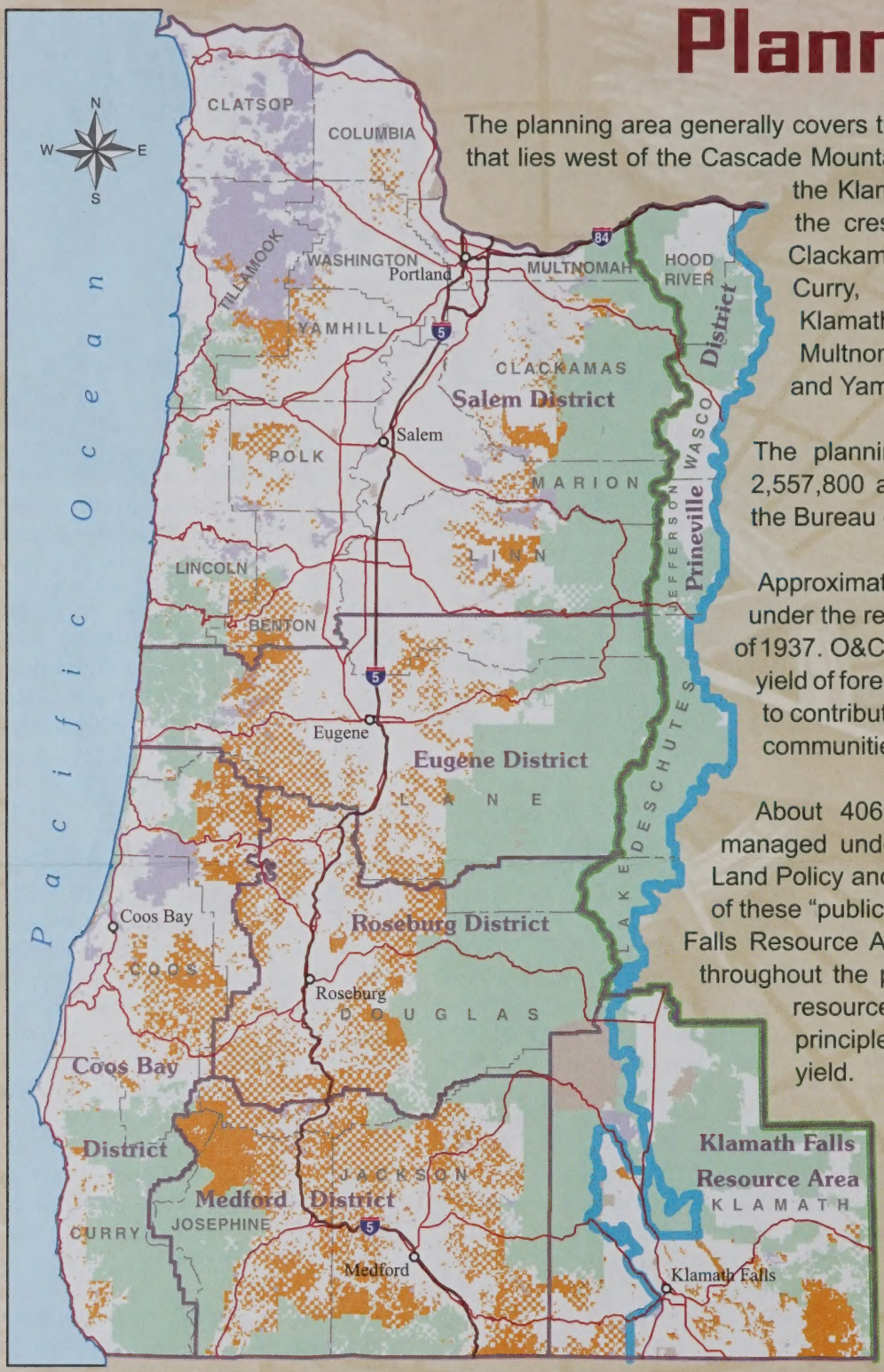
If at any time during the next few months you would like more information about these issues, or you would like to talk with us about the project, please feel free to contact the Western Oregon Plan Revision project leader, Dick Prather, at (503) 808-6627. Please send your written comments to Bureau of Land Management, Oregon/Washington State Office; ATTN: Western Oregon Planning Revision (OR930.1); P.O. Box 2965; Portland, Oregon 97208, or email: orwopr@or.blm.gov.

I appreciate your interest in BLM-managed lands. I look forward to working with you to help shape the future of BLM-managed lands in western Oregon.

Elaine M. Brong

Elaine M. Brong
Oregon/Washington State Director
Bureau of Land Management

Planning Area



The planning area generally covers that portion of the state of Oregon that lies west of the Cascade Mountains crest and public lands within the Klamath Falls Resource Area east of the crest. It includes lands in Benton, Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Tillamook, Washington and Yamhill counties.

The planning area includes approximately 2,557,800 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Approximately 2,151,200 acres are managed under the requirements of the O&C Lands Act of 1937. O&C lands are managed for a sustained yield of forest products and conditions needed to contribute to the economic stability of local communities. (See "O&C Lands" page 5.)

About 406,600 acres of other lands are managed under the provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. Most of these "public domain" lands are in the Klamath Falls Resource Area, but scattered parcels occur throughout the planning area. These lands and resources are to be managed under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data.

10 0 10 20 30 40 50 Miles

10 0 10 20 30 40 50 Kilometers

Lambert Conformal Conic Projection
North American Datum of 1983

Legend

- Northwest Forest Plan Boundary
- Western Oregon Plan Revision Boundary
- Interstate Highway
- Other Highway
- BLM Administrative Boundary

Administered Land

- Bureau of Land Management
- US Forest Service
- Other Federal Agency
- State or Local Government
- Private or Unknown

Western Oregon Plan Revisions

The O&C Lands

The Oregon and California Railroad grant lands, commonly called the O&C lands, came into existence shortly after the Civil War. Congress granted specific lands to railroad companies in 1866 for the construction of a railroad from Portland, Oregon, southward to the California border near Ashland. The lands were to be sold to the public, allowing the railroads to recoup their investment costs.

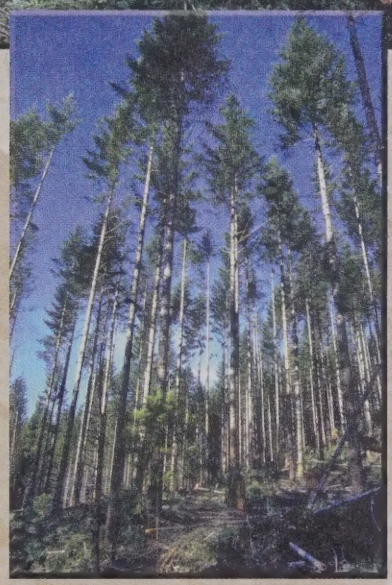
In 1916, Congress revested, or brought back into federal ownership, the title to approximately 2.9 million acres of land deeded to the Oregon and California Railroad after the company violated the terms of the land grant established in 1866. Congress also revested about 93,000 of Coos Bay Wagon Road lands due to similar circumstances in 1919.

Active federal management of the Oregon O&C lands began with the passage of the O&C Lands Act of August 28, 1937. This law provides the authority for management of O&C lands along with Coos Bay Wagon Road lands.

The O&C Lands Act placed management jurisdiction of the lands under the United States Department of the Interior, and directed that timberlands be managed:

> *. . . for permanent forest production, and the timber thereon shall be sold, cut, and removed in conformity with the principal of sustained yield for the purpose of providing a permanent source of timber supply, protecting watersheds, regulating stream flow, and contributing to the economic stability of local communities and industries, and providing recreational facilities . . .*(43 U.S.C. §1181a)

Prior to the passage of the act, no provisions for reforestation existed. The O&C Lands Act embraced the new principles of "sustained yield" requiring that harvested areas be reforested. The intent of the act was to provide a future source of timber which would contribute to local economic stability. It was assumed that providing this continuous source of timber through reforestation and regulated harvest would also protect watersheds and help regulate stream flows.



The O&C Lands Act also required that 50 percent of the revenue generated from management of the lands be returned to the 18 counties that contained revested lands. The revenues are divided annually by the percent of the assessed value of the lands in each county as they were in 1915.

Although some lands have been sold or traded over the years, much of the O&C lands retain the original "checkerboard" character. In general, O&C land is located in the odd-numbered sections and private land is located in the even-numbered sections. This creates management challenges for both the private landowners and the O&C land managers. In the Coast Range, checkerboard ownership is found throughout a typical watershed (private and public). In the Western Cascades, checkerboard is mostly in the lower part of a watershed (BLM and Private) with blocked USDA Forest Service management in headwaters. These ownership patterns have implications for resource management. For the BLM, the checkerboard can affect the agency's ability to influence watershed or landscape processes.

All of the BLM Districts in western Oregon have current Resource Management Plans that were approved in 1995. These existing plans incorporated the land use allocations and Standards and Guidelines from the Northwest Forest Plan. They also included decisions on other issues or programs such as land tenure, off-highway vehicles, etc. The existing plans provide guidance

for all activities that occur on BLM-administered lands. BLM will continue to manage these lands in accordance with the existing plans until the revised plans are completed, and Records of Decision are signed.

Settlement Agreement

The western Oregon Resource Management Plans are being revised in response to the American Forest Resource Council lawsuit settlement agreement. After the 1995 RMPs were completed, the American Forest Resource Council and others filed a lawsuit against the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture alleging that the Record of Decision for the Northwest Forest Plan violated the O&C Lands Act and numerous other laws. The Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, the American Forest Resource Council, and the Association of O&C Counties agreed to settle this lawsuit in August of 2003.

Among other requirements, the settlement agreement requires the BLM, contingent on funding, to consider in each proposed Resource Management Plan revision at least one alternative which will not create any reserves on O&C lands except as required to avoid jeopardy under the Endangered Species Act.

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The Northwest Forest Plan

In 1994, President Clinton directed the BLM and the USDA Forest Service to prepare the "Final SEIS and Record of Decision for Amendments to USDA Forest Service and BLM Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl." This document is commonly referred to as the Northwest Forest Plan. Management Plans for individual National Forests and BLM Districts (including the six Districts in the planning area) west of the Cascade Range in Washington, Oregon, and Northern California have incorporated the management direction contained in the Northwest Forest Plan.

The BLM believes the key principles which guided the development of alternatives for the Northwest Forest Plan are still valid:

- *Never forget human and economic dimensions of the issues*
- *Protect the long term health of forests, wildlife and waterways*
- *Focus on scientifically sound, ecologically creditable and legally responsible strategies and implementation*
- *Produce a predictable and sustainable level of timber sales and non-timber resources*
- *Ensure that Federal agencies work together*

The Northwest Forest Plan is one way that the O&C lands can be managed to meet the guiding principles. The alternatives analyzed in the Western Oregon Plan Revisions will address other ways BLM lands could be managed in the future while still being guided by these principles and constrained by the laws BLM must follow.

Why do you need to be involved in the process?

- *BLM will be taking a fresh look at management of public lands in western Oregon managed by the agency. Your ideas and suggestions can help shape future management.*
- *We are a diverse people with differing world views and attitudes about how best to take care of our public lands. Some people see "managed" forests as the best way to take care of the resources we hold in common. Others believe that our federal public forests should be "native" forests, rich in biological diversity with a minimum amount of disturbance from humans. Many hold views somewhere in-between. We may never completely agree about how "best" to manage public forests, but all values and ideas are important to help guide the final decisions that BLM must make.*

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Why Are These BLM Lands So Important?

- *Economic Values for Communities – In accordance with the O&C Lands Act, 18 western Oregon Counties receive about 50 percent of all revenue generated from lands managed under the O&C Lands Act (about 85 percent of the planning area). This is money that funds basic county services such as health care, law enforcement, and other vital county services. To help offset the declining timber revenues in 2001 Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act which has provided appropriated funds to support O&C Counties. This legislation is set to expire in 2006.*

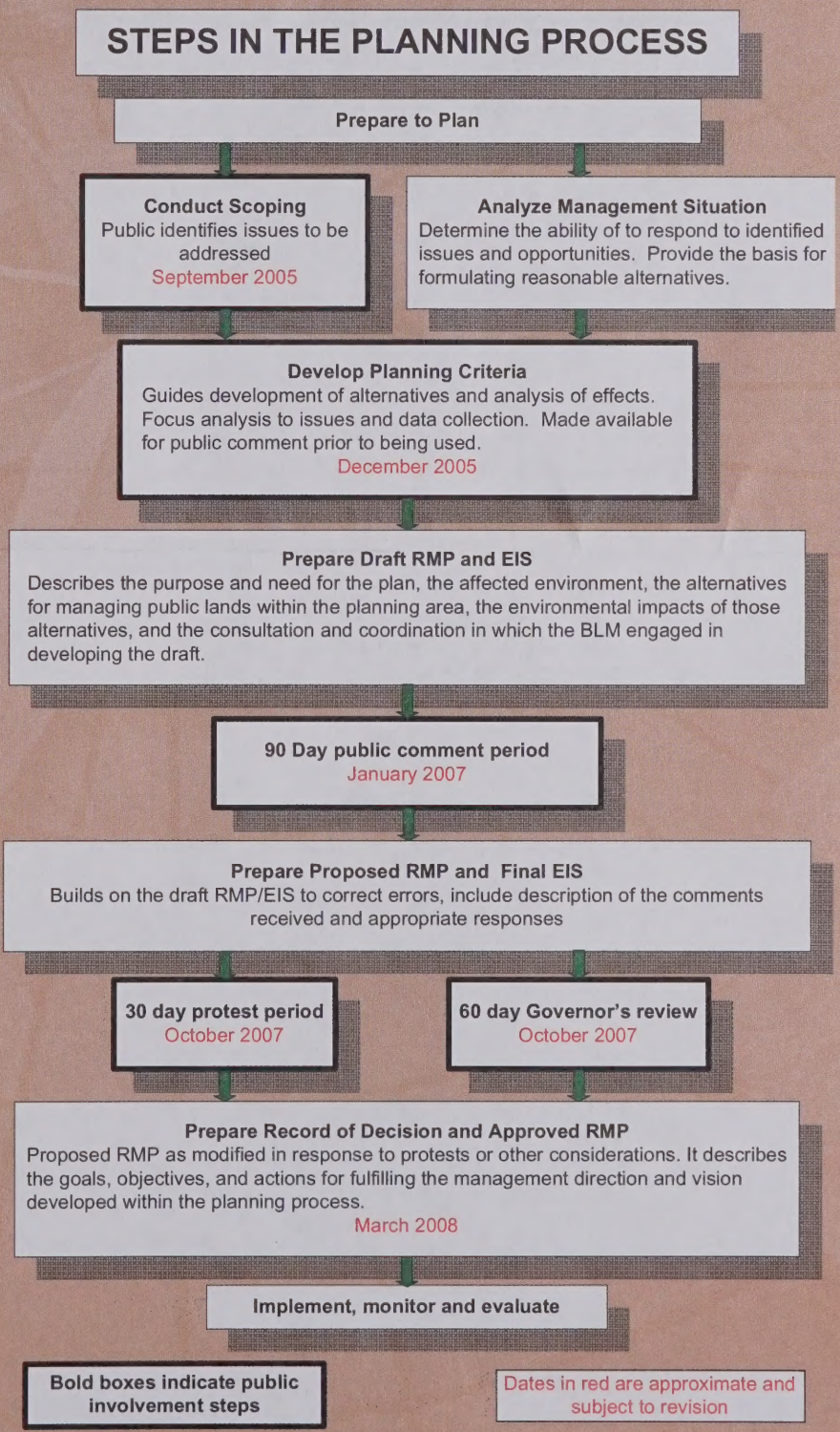
- *Healthy Forests and Sustainable Ecosystems – In addition to providing commercial and commodity products, the BLM in western Oregon must balance those products with requirements to protect biodiversity, ecosystem health, and old-growth forest ecosystems. The challenge that BLM faces is to create a sustainable ecosystem by balancing the environmental concerns, economic needs, and social values of the American people.*

Contact Information

For further information or to have your name added to or removed from the Western Oregon Planning Revision mailing list, please return the attached response form to the indicated address, or contact Alan Hoffmeister, Western Oregon Planning Revision Public Outreach Coordinator, in Portland, at (503) 808-6629, or by email at: orwopr@or.blm.gov.

Next Issue of BLM's Western Oregon Plan Revisions Newsletter

– A Summary of the recently completed "Analysis of the Management Situation."


STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS
Prepare to Plan
Conduct Scoping
Public identifies issues to be addressed
September 2005
Analyze Management Situation
Determine the ability of to respond to identified issues and opportunities. Provide the basis for formulating reasonable alternatives.
Develop Planning Criteria
Guides development of alternatives and analysis of effects. Focus analysis to issues and data collection. Made available for public comment prior to being used.
December 2005
Prepare Draft RMP and EIS
Describes the purpose and need for the plan, the affected environment, the alternatives for managing public lands within the planning area, the environmental impacts of those alternatives, and the consultation and coordination in which the BLM engaged in developing the draft.
90 Day public comment period
January 2007
Prepare Proposed RMP and Final EIS
Builds on the draft RMP/EIS to correct errors, include description of the comments received and appropriate responses
30 day protest period
October 2007
60 day Governor's review
October 2007
Prepare Record of Decision and Approved RMP
Proposed RMP as modified in response to protests or other considerations. It describes the goals, objectives, and actions for fulfilling the management direction and vision developed within the planning process.
March 2008
Implement, monitor and evaluate
Bold boxes indicate public involvement steps
Dates in red are approximate and subject to revision

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